



PRESS RELEASE

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ANNUALEX brings together nearly 100 ships

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Matthew Reinhardt, Kitty Hawk public affairs

USS KITTY HAWK, At sea – Nearly 100 U.S. and Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force ships participated in the ANNUALEX 18G exercise, including those from the USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63) Carrier Strike Group.

The two nations' ships participated in various exercises during the five-day ANNUALEX.

“ANNUALEX is actually a collection of many exercises within one big exercise,” said Operations Specialist 1st class (SW/AW) Kaleah Bolden, Destroyer Squadron 15 watch supervisor.

“It’s a big collection of war games,” said Bolden. “Subs, aircraft, ships: everybody plays in all parts of the exercise.”

The main focus during surface-ship training is practicing communicating movements and formations between ships when a language barrier exists between the two forces, said Lt. Arnold Roper, Kitty Hawk’s surface warfare officer.

Roper said the biggest goal of the exercise is command and control. He said it’s difficult to control or communicate with such a large number of forces over a vast area, especially when they don’t speak the same language.

“We don’t have seamless compatibility with our systems, so the idea here is to get our command elements and their command elements to interact in order to control the groups,” said Roper. “To help this, we have Japanese liaisons on board our ships, and American liaisons on board their ships.”

The combined forces train to defend against attacks from air, surface, and sub-surface threats, said Roper.

The destroyer squadron’s Bolden says the exercises are made as realistic as they can be.

Roper says the aircraft attempt to jam battle group communications, forcing personnel to work around such situations.

Opposing ships are divided into what are called surface action groups. These attempted to keep the strike group from completing their objectives, while the strike group, in turn, attempts to locate and neutralize those action groups, said Roper.

The opposing forces, are labeled “blue,” “red” and “white”, depending on what role they play in the exercise.

“Blue, red and white are kind of generic terms for good guy, bad guy and neutral, but the terms aren’t official in any way,” said Roper.

For sub-surface threats, ships rely on the combined efforts of the screen commander, and the sub-surface commander, said Roper.

The screen commander organizes formations of ships and submarines for defense against sub-surface threats, while the sub-surface commander controls the underwater environment, and is responsible for overall sub-surface activity, said Roper.

“Every once in a while the responsibilities of screen commander, surface commander and sub-surface commander are rotated from ship to ship,” said Roper.

Roper says the exercise will help U.S. and Japanese forces work together.

“The more we practice, the better we’ll be,” said Roper. “We find where the bugs are, and when we have trouble, we work out the kinks. Now, if we actually have to do this for real, we already have the necessary experience.”

The exercise also helps build camaraderie between the two allied nations, said Bolden.

U.S. ships taking part in ANNUALEX are Kitty Hawk, the guided-missile cruisers USS Cowpens (CG 63) and USS Shiloh (CG 67); guided-missile destroyers USS Curtis W. Wilbur (DDG 54), USS John S. McCain (DDG 56), USS Fitzgerald (DDG 62), USS Stethem (DDG 63), USS Lassen (DDG 82), USS Mustin (DDG 89), USS Halsey (DDG 97) the high-speed vessel Swift (HSV 2), and the submarines USS Seawolf (SSN 71) and USS Asheville (USS 758).

The U.S. Seventh Fleet is made up of about 50 ships, 120 aircraft and 20,000 Sailors and Marines in the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans.

For more information, visit www.news.navy.mil/local/cv63/.

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